

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 12540 111528Z

64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07 PM-04 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 /072 W

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R 111507Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4454

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 12540

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, UK

SUBJECT: NEW BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER IN NEW DELHI

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE HAS ANNOUNCED THE APPOINTMENT OF JOHN THOMSON, ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENSE AND ARMS CONTROL, AS THE NEW BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER IN NEW DELHI.

2. BORN IN 1927 IN SCOTLAND, THOMSON RECEIVED HIS SECONDARY EDUCATION MAINLY IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES AND LATER GRADUATED FROM ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY AND CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY. HE SERVED IN THE ROYAL NAVY FROM 1945-1948.

3. THOMSON ENTERED THE FOREIGN SERVICE IN 1950 AND STUDIED ARABIC. HE SERVED IN JIDDA, DAMASCUS AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE. IN 1958 THOMSON WAS APPOINTED PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY. FROM 1960-1964 HE SERVED AS FIRST SECRETARY (WHERE, INTER ALIA, HE REPRESENTED UK IN BERLIN QUADRIPARTITE PLANNING GROUP) IN WASHINGTON, RETURNING THEN TO SUCCEED SIR MICHAEL PALLISER AS HEAD OF FCO PLANNING STAFF. IN 1968 HE MOVED TO THE CABINET OFFICE AS CHIEF OF THE ASSESSMENTS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 LONDON 12540 111528Z

STAFF. IN 1972 THOMSON BECAME DEPUTY UK REPRESENTATIVE

TO NATO (MINISTER), RETURNING TO THE FCO IN 1973 AS ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY. DURING THEIR EARLY STAGES, HE WAS CHIEF BRITISH SPOKESMAN FOR MBFR TALKS. HE HAS USUALLY ACTED AS UK "EXPERT" AT NATO SALT CONSULTATIONS. HE HAS RECENTLY SPARKPLUGGED BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS TALKS.

4. IN 1953 HE MARRIED ELIZABETH ANNE MCCLURE WHO WAS BORN IN PENNSYLVANIA AND RETAINS HER US CITIZENSHIP. THEY HAVE THREE SONS AND A DAUGHTER. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: THOMSON'S APPOINTMENT TO NEW DELHI (ONE OF BRITAIN'S DOZEN GRADE 1 POSTS) AT THE EARLY AGE OF 49 (HE LOOKS AT LEAST 10 YEARS YOUNGER) IS A MAJOR PROMOTION. HIS ASSIGNMENT TO NEW DELHI WILL BROADEN HIS SCOPE BEYOND EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST. ACCORDING TO SOME FCO SOURCES, THOMSON HAS THE INSIDE TRACK TO BECOME PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY, THE TOP JOB IN THE BRITISH FOREIGN SERVICE, WHEN SIR MICHAEL PALLISER RETIRES SOME YEARS HENCE. HE MUST ALSO BE RECKONED AS A POTENTIAL BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S.

6. THOMSON, WHO NOW HOLDS FCO POSITION WHICH IS MOST NEARLY EQUIVALENT TO DIRECTOR OF PM IN DEPARTMENT, HAS BECOME ONE OF BRITAIN'S PRINCIPAL SPECIALISTS IN IMPORTANT NATO-NUCLEAR-ARMS CONTROL-POLITICO-MILITARY COMPLEX OF ISSUES. HE IS WELL KNOWN TO MOST US OFFICIALS WHO HAVE WORKED IN THESE AREAS AS AN ACTIVIST, IMAGINATIVE, ARTICULATE, HARD-WORKING DIPLOMAT. HE TENDS TO BE SERIOUS AND IF HE HAS ANY DEFICIENCIES IT IS IN SENSE OF HUMOR, INCLUDING PARTICULARLY ABOUT HIMSELF. END CONFIDENTIAL.

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7. PARENTHETICALLY, BOTH THOMSON'S FATHER AND GRANDFATHER WERE NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS IN PHYSICS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LONDON12540
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760309-0633
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760865/aaaacenm.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <23 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER IN NEW DELHI
TAGS: PINR, PDIP, UK, IN, (THOMPSON, JOHN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006